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CAN'T WE BAN FIREWORKS IN MURRAY?

It's good to note that our residents in and around Murray City enjoyed another successful 4th of July Fun Days event this year. I express appreciation to city staff and numerous volunteers for their great work, from the Rotary Club breakfast at 6:30 am to the fabulous professional fireworks program at 10:00 pm, and all of the great events in between.

As we celebrated our national and state holidays, a number of residents communicated concern over consumer fireworks, many of them asking if the city could or would consider banning consumer fireworks in residential areas. The short answer to that question is "no," and I'll explain why.

Consumer fireworks have been a part of the celebrations of Independence Day, Pioneer Day, and New Year's Day for many, many years. Prior to 2011, legal fireworks were only those considered "safe and sane" that did not exceed a height of 15 feet when discharged. In 2011 the Utah State Legislature passed House Bill 22 which legalized aerial fireworks in Utah. These aerial fireworks are commonly known as multiple tube fireworks, repeater fireworks, or "cakes" lit by a single fuse. Fireworks proponents argued that legalizing aerial fireworks would capture lost revenue that was going to neighboring states where these fireworks were already legal.

Following the new legislation, some municipalities initiated regulations on the newly legalized aerial fireworks. That prompted the legislature to step in and revise the law to prohibit the ability of a county or municipality to regulate the use of these fireworks, except in wildland interface areas and parkways, thus taking the regulatory authority out of the hands of the cities.



Due to the number of complaints over the past several years about the aerial fireworks, the legislature amended the law once again in the 2018 session to reduce the number of days that the fireworks are allowed to be discharged. Historically the fireworks were allowed to be legally discharged from July 1 - 7, and from July 21 - 27. Beginning in 2018, the fireworks are only allowed to be discharged from July 2 - 5, and from July 21 – 25. They are also allowed on New Year's Eve and Chinese New Year. The shorter time frame allowed for legal discharge this year was appreciated by many residents, including me.

So that's the long answer. Murray City is not allowed to ban fireworks in our residential neighborhoods due to State Law (53-7-225).

I should note that not all fireworks are legal in Utah. Still banned are firecrackers, M-80's, cherry bombs, bottle rockets, Roman candles, and single or reloadable mortars. However, it is often more difficult for enforcers to differentiate the legal aerial fireworks from the illegal ones.

Not everyone dislikes the fireworks. Many residents have expressed that for a few days a year, they enjoy the fireworks, and it appears that they are voting with their wallets! Fireworks sales generate millions of dollars for the state each year. So whether you love them, hate them, or are just indifferent, it appears the fireworks are here to stay unless enough State Legislators can be convinced to give the regulatory authority back to the municipalities that have to deal with the "fall-out" of fireworks.